

Part 7 – Eschatology

Section 3: Millennial Views

What is the millennium and when does it happen?

What does Revelation 20:1-7 mean?

Revelation 20:1-7 “20 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They[a] had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5 (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

What is the millennium?

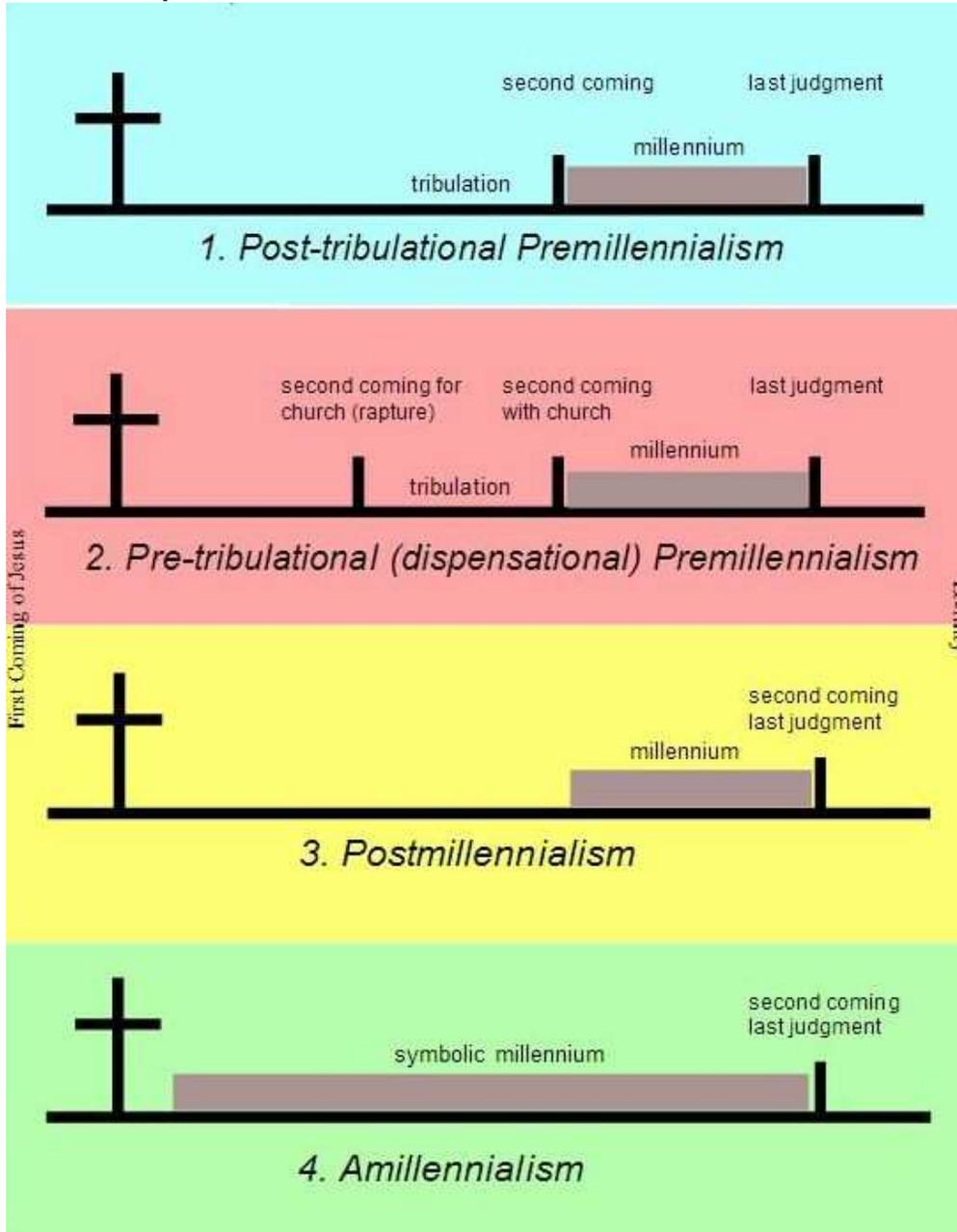
Millennium derives from the Latin *mille*, thousand, and *annus*, year. It is clear from the passage above that it will take place but will it literally be a thousand years? When will it happen? Will we physically reign together on the earth with Christ? In all of the main views, the millennium occurs before we enter what is known as the eternal state.

It will not happen as we expect

It was prophesied on many occasions that the Messiah would come to the earth but it didn't happen the way people thought it would. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that many people's preconceptions of what the Messiah was going to be like, and who he was going to be, were very different from what he turned out to be like and who he was when he finally came to this earth. It was these preconceptions that led the Jews to crucify

Jesus, as their hearts and minds were closed to what God was actually doing amongst them.

In the same way, we read about possible future events, such as the millennium, picture what will happen and hold firmly to that view to the extent that it dictates our lives. It might be fair to say that the coming of the Messiah was prophesied about many more times and with more clarity than the millennium was. For this reason, we should keep our hearts and minds open both now and in future.



Many people have used their millennial view to separate themselves from the rest of the body of Christ on the earth. They believe that their view is the correct one and look down on others that hold a different view.

Pre, Post and A

The best way of remembering the millennial views is that they are all named in relation to Jesus' second coming; something that we are certain is going to happen.

Amillennialism

Just like atypical meaning not typical,

asocial meaning not social or amoral meaning not moral, amillennialism is the view that there is no millennium or no future one thousand year reign of Christ.

This is perhaps the easiest of all the views to understand. Everything happens at the same time, Christ comes back, believers and unbelievers

are resurrected, judgement takes place, there is a new heaven and new earth and we enter into the eternal state.

Amillennialists believe that the millennium is most likely to be symbolic and that it is already taking place now. Believers that die, go straight to heaven to reign together with Christ now, in this present “Church Age”. It’s a heavenly reign that’s taking place as in Matthew 28:18 “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”.

They argue that the whole idea of a future millennium is based on this one passage (Rev 20) and it is not mentioned elsewhere.

Postmillennialism

This is the view that Christ will return after the millennium, as “post” derives from the Latin for after. This means that Christ is not physically present on the earth during the millennium and he only comes back when the thousand years are up. Some think that it will be one thousand years, others say this is figurative speak.

Postmillennialists believe that as the gospel spreads and the Holy Spirit is at work, the world will become a better place to live in until we finally come in to the millennium

This view was fairly popular before the First World War, when the world appeared to be improving really fast. Science and technology was really moving forwards and the gospel was spreading really fast and influencing society. Once the First World War began and intensified, people began to believe that this view may not be how the millennium is going to happen.

Premillennialism

Holders of this view believe that Christ will come back before the millennium, as “pre” derives from the Latin for before. It is the most literal interpretation of Revelation 20.

Premillennialists also believe that there will be two resurrections. The first of these will be the resurrection of the righteous. The second will be the resurrection of unbelievers for judgement and this will take place after the millennium.

Christ comes back and the living believers are caught up with him in the clouds, together with those that have already died (1 Thes. 4:17). All the

believers then return to earth immediately to reign with Christ for a thousand years.

Pre-tribulational (dispensational) Premillennialism

This view came into prominence in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, mainly in the UK and the USA.

Those that hold this view say that there will be a seven year gap between Christ coming for the believers and then the believers going back to earth to reign together with Christ. This means that the believers do not experience the tribulation. During the seven-year period of tribulation, many of the signs that were prophesied to occur before Christ comes back will take place, such as the great ingathering of the Jewish people.

What should we do?

With some apparent uncertainty regarding what will actually happen with regards to the millennium, how are we supposed to respond? Do we take one view and discard all of the others and then prepare ourselves as best possible believing that things will happen in the order we have decided they will?

We must lead a life of prayer and maintain a close relationship with the Lord, He will guide us when unusual things start happening. However the millennium unfolds, we know it will be completely out of our control, we must therefore trust in him. It is something that is humbling for us and causes us to give glory to God. Whether the millennium means Christ reigns in heaven now or whether there is a future millennium to come, we must allow him to reign over us.

As mentioned in the introduction, the millennium must not divide believers. All respected theologians understand that there is a lot of uncertainty with regards to what the Bible teaches on this theme.

Songs: King of Kings Majesty, King and Sovereign Lord

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